

GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

A Roadmap for Grandparents & Older Relative Caregivers



2022



A message from Commissioner Jean Brown

Few people expect to be parenting late in life. Senior adults caring for children may find their leisure time and independence replaced with day-to-day activities of helping with homework, attending extra-curricular activities, and added financial obligations. The physical, emotional, and financial demands of this new role can sometimes feel overwhelming.

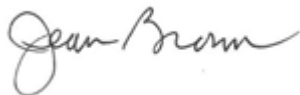
However, raising children can also be incredibly rewarding. There can be a greater sense of purpose and connection in life, a renewed spirit, and the companionship of younger people. While some senior caregivers may find they have less energy than they had at a younger age, they may discover that their wisdom and experience make an enormous difference. Seniors may find this new role to be the most important of their lifetime. Children need a sense of belonging, stability, and cultural identity that many grandparents and older caregivers are uniquely well suited to provide.



Thankfully, help is available. Sorting through the services and agencies needed by a family can be challenging. The Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS), through the Alabama CARES program, developed this toolkit with you in mind – the grandparent or older relative caregiver who is raising children again due to military service or circumstances that otherwise make a child's parents unavailable. There are many government and nonprofit resources accessible by phone or online.

Senior adults are a part of a growing community of caregivers. No one person or organization has all the answers. Don't hesitate to ask for help. Use your network, talk to other people, and draw upon your experience, imagination, and inspiration. Encourage others with your experiences. Contact your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) or any of the number of resources identified in this toolkit.

You are not alone.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jean Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jean Brown
Commissioner

Table of Contents

Starting Your Journey.....	2
Obtaining Documents	3
Legal Issues, Guardianship, and Custody	6
Health, Well-being, Safety, and Development.....	8
Child Care and Education.....	14
A Realistic Picture of Benefits	16
Connecting Through Community Support	18
Problem-Solving Tips	20
Immunization Checklist	21
Important Phone Numbers	22
Grandparents' Notes	23



Starting Your Journey

This toolkit will help identify and access resources, while providing information to assist those on a new caregiving journey.

It is important to secure documentation and information about children for whom you are caring. In most cases, you will be required to show originals and/or provide copies to schools, physicians, and child care organizations.

Make copies of this checklist if caring for multiple children.

See the section “Obtaining Documents” for additional information concerning needed documents.

Child's Name: _____ _____ _____			
	Have it	Need it	N/A
Birth Certificate			
Social Security Card			
Insurance Card			
Medical and Immunizations Records (see Immunization Checklist at the end of this toolkit)			
Legal Documents (court order)			
Death Certificate(s) (if biological parent(s) deceased)			
Citizenship Documents (if applicable)			
Pediatrician's Information			
School and Teacher(s) Name(s)			



Obtaining Documents

Birth Certificate

First, if possible, attempt to have the birth parent(s) obtain this document. If this is not an option, legal authorization from a civil or juvenile court may be needed. This can be done through the guardianship process.

By Alabama law, birth certificates are confidential records with restricted access for 125 years from the date of birth. Birth certificates may be obtained by the following person(s) upon payment of the applicable fee:

- Person named on the certificate
- Mother, father, or legal guardian
- Husband or wife of person named on certificate
- Son or daughter of person named on certificate
- Sister or brother of person named on certificate
- Legal representative of an authorized person

Identification Requirements – Effective May 1, 2017, identification is required to obtain a restricted birth certificate.

There is currently a \$15 fee to search for a birth certificate. This fee includes one certified copy of the birth record or a “Certificate of Failure to Find.” Additional copies of the same record ordered at the same time are \$6 each.

If the child was born in Alabama, the following information is needed to locate a birth certificate:

- Full name of person at birth
- Date of birth
- Sex
- County or city of birth
- Hospital of birth - if not in a hospital, state “home”
- Full name of both parents before first marriage
- Your name
- Your signature
- Your relationship to the person whose certificate you are requesting
- Address where the certificate is to be mailed
- Your daytime telephone number

Contact: Alabama Vital Records
P.O. Box 5625
Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5625
(334) 206-5418
AlabamaPublicHealth.gov/vitalrecords/birth-certificates.html

If the child was not born in Alabama, the National Center for Health Statistics has information on vital records for all states. For more information visit the website:

CDC.gov/nchs/w2w/Alabama

Social Security Card

If the child in your care does not have a social security card, or it is lost, you may apply for a new or replacement card. You do not have to be the child’s legal guardian. However, U.S. citizens need a copy of their birth certificate or a U.S. passport to obtain this document. The Social Security Administration (SSA) assigns Social Security numbers and administers the Social Security retirement, survivors, and disability insurance programs. SSA also administers the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program for the aged, blind, and disabled.

For further information call the SSA office toll free at **1-800-772-1213** (TTY **1-800-325-0778**) or visit online at SSA.gov/agency/contact

Insurance Card

Does the child in your care have medical coverage? When children have health insurance, they are more likely than uninsured children to be healthy and to get the proper medical care they need. Obtaining an insurance card for the child in your care is very important. If you are unsure whether he/she has insurance coverage, find out today. If possible, ask the child’s parent(s). If that is not an option, and you have gone through a legal process for the child in your care, ask any legal professional employed in the process. If you are still unsure after asking questions and the child has no access to employer coverage as a dependent, see the section “A Realistic Picture of Benefits” in this toolkit for further information about coverage.



Medical and Immunization Records

If possible, it is best to obtain medical records from the birth parent(s) or ask them to sign a Power of Attorney for Care of a Minor Child Medical Consent. Completion of this form, along with the proper signatures, should be enough to enroll a minor child between the ages of 6 and 17 in school and authorize medical treatment. However, a school district may require additional documentation as allowed under Alabama law before enrolling the child in school or extracurricular activities.

A pediatrician's office may also be able to help obtain these records. If your grandchild has been enrolled in school, the school should have medical records on file and allow you to obtain a copy. Alabama Code §§22-8-4 and 22-8-7 provides youth age 14 or older may consent to any legally authorized medical, dental, health, or mental health services.

It is important to make sure the child or children in your care are vaccinated on time. These shots are essential for developing a strong immune system and ensuring their long-term health. You may find it difficult or impossible to enroll the child you are caring for in school or day care without up-to-date immunizations. Use the check list at the end of this toolkit for knowing when specific immunizations are due. For more information, contact the Alabama Department of Public Health Immunization

Division at (800) 252-1818 or visit:

AlabamaPublicHealth.gov/immunization

Legal Documents (court order)

See the section in this toolkit, "Legal Issues, Guardianship, and Custody" for legal information. If you have gone through a legal process for the child in your care, make sure you have the proper legal documents from the proceedings.

Death Certificate(s)

By Alabama law, death certificates are confidential records with restricted access for 25 years from the date of death. Death certificates more than 25 years old may be obtained by anyone upon payment of the proper fee. Death certificates less than 25 years old may be obtained by the following persons, upon payment of the proper fee:

- Mother or father of person named on certificate
- Husband or wife of person named on certificate
- Son or daughter of person named on certificate
- Sister or brother of person named on certificate
- Grandchild of person named on certificate when demonstrating entitlement
- Legal representative of family or estate
- Informant listed on death certificate as providing information

Identification Requirements – Effective May 1, 2017, identification is required to obtain a restricted death certificate.

There is currently a \$15 fee, which includes one certified copy of the death certificate or a “Certificate of Failure to Find.” For each additional copy of the certificate ordered at the same time, the fee is \$6. Checks or money orders should be made payable to the State Board of Health. If obtaining the certificate by mail, please do not send cash. Fees are not refundable. Additional fees are required for expedited service.

The following information is required. Please provide as much of the following information as possible for the health department to locate a death certificate.

- Full legal name of deceased
- Date of death
- County (or city) of death
- Sex
- Social Security number
- Date of birth or age at death
- Race
- Name of spouse
- Names of parents
- Your name

- Your signature
- Your relationship to the person whose certificate you are requesting
- Address where the certificate is to be mailed
- Your daytime telephone number

Contact: Alabama Vital Records
P.O. Box 5625
Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5625
(334) 206-5418

If the death(s) did not occur in Alabama, the National Center for Health Statistics has information on vital records for all states. For more information, visit the website at:
CDC.gov/nchs/w2w/Alabama.htm

Citizenship Documents

To obtain citizenship documents, contact the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Field Office in Montgomery, Alabama:

Regular Toll-free (800) 375-5283
TDD for hearing impaired (800) 767-1833
Toll-free for military (877) 247-4645

These phone numbers are automated – but have options to speak with someone.





Legal Issues, Guardianship, and Custody

Caring for children on a permanent basis can mean significant lifestyle changes. While mapping out your journey, you should consider:

- How will this impact my Social Security benefits?
- Will I need to return to work?
- Do I have enough money to care for myself and children long-term?
- Are children allowed where I live?
- Will my employer allow adjustments to my work schedule?
- Is my grandchild insured? If not, where can I get help?
- Do I have the documentation needed? See “Starting Your Journey” on page 2.
- If needed, can I get counseling for my relative child?
- Can other family members or friends serve as a support group?

Power of Attorney

A Power of Attorney for Care of a Minor Child is a legal arrangement in which birth parents grant authority to relatives or grandparents to perform certain custodial tasks for the child, such as school enrollment and immunization shots. The advantage of this document is a court is not involved. The disadvantage is it may be revoked by a birth parent at any time.

Physical Custody

Physical custody is an informal agreement in which the relatives or grandparents care for the children in their home without official or legal authority. Relatives or grandparents have no formal rights or authority to make decisions regarding the child. The birth parents retain all the rights and responsibilities.

Legal Guardianship

Legal guardianship is a legal arrangement in which an adult has court-ordered authority and responsibility to care for a child. In most counties, relatives or grandparents file for guardianship in district court. In certain circumstances, guardianship may be granted in juvenile court if there has been a deprived action filed regarding the child.

Guardianship may be necessary in cases of death of parent(s), abandonment, inadequate care, or abuse. Guardianship is a more permanent arrangement than Power of Attorney and limits repeated disruption to the child’s home environment.

Guardians can:

- Consent to medical treatment;
- Enroll the child in school;
- Obtain documents, such as a birth certificate; and
- Prevent birth parents from taking the child from the home without court consent.

Under guardianship, birth parents retain superior parental rights, which include visitation, determination of child’s religious faith, adoption consent, and financial support such as medical expenses. Birth parents, if able, must contribute child support. Once guardianship is ordered, the child must live with the guardian. Only a court can transfer guardianship back to the birth parents.

Legal Custody

Legal custody is a formal court agreement in which custody is granted to a relative or grandparent(s), giving them legal authority to make all decisions regarding the child. Birth parents remain financially responsible for the child even though their rights have been suspended by the court. Birth parents do maintain visitations rights. Custody to a relative or grandparent is granted in Alabama only when the child is at risk of serious or irreparable harm. If the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) is involved with the relative’s child you are caring for, you should be informed about Kinship Care.

Informal Kinship Care

Informal Kinship Care is an informal agreement between the birth parent(s) and a relative involving placement of the child. This does not involve the court. Relatives or grandparents have no legal rights, and the birth parents can remove the child at any time. It is advantageous to put agreements in writing regarding the health, safety, well-being, and the length of time the child will be in the care of a relative(s).



Formal Kinship Care

The Kinship Care Program pertaining to foster care is limited to children who are eligible to receive state foster care payments and have resided in a fully approved, related foster family home for at least six consecutive months.

A case-by-case determination is made for each child. The following must be true:

1. Being returned home or adopted is not an appropriate option and is not in the best interests of the child.
2. The child has a strong attachment to the prospective kinship guardian and the kinship guardian has a strong commitment to caring permanently for the child.
3. If a child is 14 or older, the child must be consulted regarding the kinship guardianship arrangement.

Kinship guardianship is a judicially created relationship and

is achieved at the time kinship guardianship is awarded to the relative by the court.

You will be assigned a DHR worker/kinship navigator who can assist you with questions, applications, and referrals to other services. Or call the toll-free number at (844) 4ALA-KIN (425-2546) for assistance.

Adoption

When relatives or grandparents adopt a child, the legal rights of the parents are terminated permanently, and you become the child's legal parent. Typically, the birth parents agree to give up their rights or are declared unfit by the court.

Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (AFAPA) (888) 545-2372 or AFAPA.org

Alabama State Bar Association Toll-Free: (800) 354-6154 or ALABAR.org



Health, Well-Being, Safety, and Development

Physical examinations are key to preventing and detecting medical, developmental, and behavioral issues along a child's life journey. Preventive care services are available throughout the state and include medical and dental screenings. It is important for the child in your care to be up to date on immunizations. The child should also have a head-to-toe wellness exam to establish their baseline health.

A child development timeline from birth to 4 years old is available to assist you in knowing what to expect with different bodily functions. Every child develops differently. If you have questions or concerns, contact your child's pediatrician or the local county Public Health Department where you live. Visit AlabamaPublicHealth.gov to find locations for your local Public Health Department.



Child Development – Body & Mind Timeline

1 Month

Infant should be fed formula or nursed. Infants cannot process cow's milk. Will make fist and lifts head slightly when lying down; sensitive to light and sounds; watches caregiver's face. Sleep patterns vary; series of naps totaling 14-17 hours per day. Hears voices; makes small throat noises; begins cooing; makes single vowel sounds. Infant car seats **MUST** be used; secure infant to prevent falls, and do not leave alone except in crib or playpen; crib bars should be no more than 2 3/8 inches apart; mattress must fit crib snugly; do not hang pacifier around the neck; do not prop bottle as it may increase chances of choking. Avoid taking infants out in crowds, overdressing, and sun overexposure. Always test bath temperature before placing infant in water; sponge bathe until umbilical cord heals; change diapers frequently; use vitamins, fluoride, and iron if directed by a doctor; contact health provider for appointment for a newborn as soon as possible. Cries are not always hunger related; they may be for attention, position change, or discomfort.

ABC'S OF SLEEP

ALONE

Babies should not sleep in a bed with you or anyone else. When you put an infant in a crib, there should not be any toys, stuffed animals, blankets, or bumper pads.

BACK

Babies should always be put to sleep on their backs, not on their sides or stomach.

CRIB

Babies should always sleep in their own crib or bassinet. Don't put an infant in the bed with you, or in a couch or chair, car seat, stroller, or bouncy chair for sleeping.

BABY BOX INITIATIVE

This program provides education and resources for parents that are needed to ensure a safe sleep environment for their infant. Baby Boxes are new baby starter kits that double as safe sleep spaces for infants. Each Baby Box includes a custom mattress with fitted sheet so it can be used as a bassinet. For more information contact the Alabama Department of Human Resources at DHR.Alabama.gov or call (334) 242-1310.

- 2 Months** Bladder capacity increases. Improved head control; eyes follow moving person; may get fist to mouth. Sustained sleep seldom exceeds four hours; waking time increases. Responds differently to voice of primary caregiver. Crying differs for pain and hunger. Infant car seats **MUST** be used and properly secured; and don't leave infant alone; keep crib sides raised as infant squirms around more; toys should be large, have smooth edges, no small parts, and be non-breakable. Some immunizations will cause discomfort. If needed, you can give the correct dosage of Tylenol (acetaminophen) as directed by your doctor and provide cool compresses to the skin area. Some signs of illness can be changes in feeding, sleeping, disposition, fever, sneezing, vomiting, and diarrhea. Infant is getting used to repeated actions of caregivers.
- 4 Months** Decrease in reflexes, increase in controlled movements; head steady when sitting supported; supports weight on arms; may roll over. Sleep begins to decrease; 70% of children will sleep through the night. Laughs aloud; begins to make sounds; babbling begins and varies volume of sounds. Increased infant mobility, such as turning over and tendency to put objects in mouth requires extra precaution. Keep using car seat and watch for damaged toys. It might be time to lower the mattress in the crib. Keep poisons locked away. Discuss reactions to the first immunization with your doctor in anticipation of response to future immunizations. Reactions can include fever and severe crying. "Calls" for parental assistance; sleeps rather than interacts if over-stimulated.

CRIBS FOR KIDS

Alabama has partnered with the **National Cribs for Kids** program and is dedicated to "helping every baby sleep safer." Funding has allowed Alabama to purchase a limited number of Graco® Pack 'n Play® portable cribs for families who meet qualifications and need a safe sleep environment for infants less than one year old. Call the Alabama Department of Public Health at (334) 206-5675 for more information.

- 6 Months** Sits; rolls over in both directions; imitates familiar gestures. Steady sleep increases seven to 10 hours; 83% of children sleep through the night. Imitates familiar sounds; will jabber to get attention. Using an infant car seat properly is very important; toys specifically designed for teething should be used. Do not put large stuffed animals in crib, and make environment safe (mattress in lowest position, poisons and plants out of reach; electrical outlets plugged with safety plugs, extension cords and space heaters out of reach, stairs gated). If needed, discuss teething medications with your doctor. Do not allow an infant to fall asleep with the bottle in his or her mouth in order to help prevent tooth decay. Infant wants caregiver nearby; curious; frustrated if movement is restricted.
- 9 Months** Sits alone; no head leaning when pulled to sit; bears weight on legs when supported; stands with help; moves around by hitching, rolling, crawling, and creeping; plays hide-and-seek and peek-a-boo; moves blocks; claps hands.
- Total sleep needs gradually decrease; takes two or three naps daily; may awaken briefly during night. Laughs and squeals; "talks" to toys; recognizes familiar words; vocalizes emotions; imitates sounds. Child is moving around more. Continue using an infant car seat. Keep your house safe as listed in 2- and 4-month-old instructions. Watch for older children's toys.



In addition to locking away poisons, have the **Poison Help phone number: 1-800-222-1222** handy. Children can drown in an inch or less of water. Food should be in small pieces (example: hot dogs cut long-ways and side-ways). If you are riding a bicycle with a child, use approved child seat and helmet. A newborn child is curious and needs to explore. Caregiver is main resource; movement and activity help release tension; also copes by crying, fussing, or sleeping.

12 Months Shows signs of knowing when having a bowel movement. Twists while sitting without falling; pulls to stand; creeps; stands alone; walks with help; may take steps alone; puts objects into container and stacks items. One or two naps daily; may awaken during night; may resist going to bed. May say “mama” and “dada” and may say two to three words; uses expressive sounds. PEANUTS AND POPCORN present choke hazards - do not let child eat. Keep money and poisons out of reach; medications locked, and low water level in tub at bath time. Child should ALWAYS be supervised. Teach the meaning of “hot” and things that cause injury, such as sharp objects and chemicals. Use sunscreen when taking the child outdoors (check with your doctor for strength (SPF).) You will probably see an increase in number of colds. Follow your doctor’s recommendations. Teeth should be gently rubbed with a soft cloth as soon as they emerge. Toothpaste and brushes especially designed for children can be used. Be careful of snack foods. Children can eat only a small amount of food and need good nutrition to grow. Child searches for caregiver; will handle new situations best if caregiver is involved.

15 Months Walks alone well; stoops to recover toy; creeps up stairs; runs; climbs; has difficulty stopping suddenly or going around corners. Removes shoes and socks; turns cardboard-type book pages; tosses and rolls ball. Sleeps 11-14 hours per night; usually one afternoon nap. Says five or six words; shakes head “no.” Your child is really moving about. Besides keeping in mind car, home, stair, water, and toy safety, be especially mindful of countertops used for climbing. Secure dangling cords (child can reach between/under furniture). It is tempting to allow a child to play in a fenced-in yard. The child is too young to be unsupervised. Always watch them. It is important that the baby have regular physical activity. Adds temper tantrum coping strategies in response to stress.

- 18 Months** May show signs of early readiness for toilet training. Talk with pediatrician regarding training methods. Runs, climbs, stops, and starts easily; rounds corners without difficulty. Builds four to five block tower; well-controlled grasp and release; manipulates objects with good wrist control. Sleeps 11-12 hours at night; daytime nap varies from less than one hour to more than two hours. Should know 10 words. When on play equipment, make sure child can manage the size and motion and be safely secured. Be especially watchful when seasons change and new activities begin, such as playing in water. Supervise play with other children. It may be time to move from a crib to a regular bed with removable bedside rails. Review source and use of vitamins and fluoride with your doctor. Very low tolerance for frustration; active vocal and physical response to tension; uses transitional objects (favorite blanket, toy) and rituals for comfort and security; uses distraction and pretend play with toys as coping strategies.
- 2 Years** Toilet training continues. Afternoon naps decrease in frequency; night awakenings may continue; may encounter new stress, have nightmares. Uses two- to three-word sentences; follows directions; uses the words "me" and "my." Child imitates others without regard to own safety. Parents must monitor play with older children, use of tricycle and wheeled toys; supervise use of pencils, nontoxic paints, and crayons. Possibility of drowning in small amounts of water still exists. Monitor house and yard safety. Continue use of gate with steep/narrow stairs. Teach child to blow nose, cover mouth when coughing or sneezing. Continues to use transitional objects for comfort; temper tantrums are more frequent if child is tired, hungry or frustrated; routine is important; negativism begins to decrease; uses idle time and imagination.
- 3 Years** Toilet trained during the day; nighttime training varies; accidents are common. Rides tricycle; alternates feet going up stairs; dresses and undresses self. Less protesting at bedtime; may rest but not sleep during afternoon. Child is still too small for an adult seatbelt. Use child or booster car seats depending on child's weight and height. Continue to be watchful of playground equipment and maintain outdoor supervision. Teach street and pedestrian safety. Do not permit child to cross streets alone. Review and practice when walking with child. This is a good time for organized swimming lessons. Teach child to brush teeth, get adequate sleep and rest. Your child may need some quiet time before meals to make up for tiredness from play. Temper tantrums, negativism, and having to do things in an exact order decreasing; active imagination; may have imaginary friend.
- 4 Years** Manages toileting without help; remains dry at night with occasional accidents. Balances on one foot for five to 10 seconds; hops forward; heel-to-toe walk; alternates feet going up and down stairs; climbs jungle gym; catches ball with arms; shows preference to left or right; begins to use children's safety scissors. Sleeps 10-13 hours per night; may need occasional afternoon nap or rest; dislikes bedtime. Uses four- to five-word sentences; speech rate increases; stories more logical, detailed. Child is very quick moving around and bolting out of the house if the door is not locked. Reinforce street and pedestrian safety rules. To ride in the car, place child in child seat in the back seat. Remember, children do what they see you do, so use your seatbelt. If around water and boating, insist on a life preserver. Warn children about strange animals. Remind children to not put objects in their mouth or run with something in their mouth. Illnesses may increase due to more contact with other children. Help your child brush teeth regularly. Floss your child's teeth. Begins to talk (directly or indirectly) about fears concerning his/her body, animals, the dark; uses play and pretends.

Well Child Check-Ups

Officially called the Early, Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program, EPSDT is a mandated program designed to find children with actual or potential health problems and to screen, diagnose, and treat the problems before they become permanent, lifelong disabilities. The program also offers preventive health services to Medicaid-eligible children under 21 years old, except those who receive pregnancy-related or family planning services only. Visit [Medicaid.Alabama.gov](https://www.Medicaid.Alabama.gov) for additional information or call toll free (800) 362-1504.

Children's Rehabilitation Services

Provides quality medical, rehabilitative, coordination, and support services for children with special health care needs and their families. For more information call (800) 846-3697 or visit [Rehab.Alabama.gov/services/crs](https://www.Rehab.Alabama.gov/services/crs) for additional information.

Nutritional Health

Healthy eating in childhood and adolescence is important for many reasons. Among the most important is to ensure proper growth and development as well as to prevent various health conditions. Establish a healthy eating pattern early that includes:

- A variety of fruits and vegetables;
- Whole grains;
- Fat-free and low-fat dairy products (consult physician);
- A variety of protein foods; and
- Oils.

The Mayo Clinic provides a nutrition formula basic chart for girls and boys at various ages which is based on the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Access this chart at [MayoClinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/nutrition-for-kids/art-20049335](https://www.MayoClinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/nutrition-for-kids/art-20049335)

To assist you with providing proper nutrition for the child(ren) in your care, the following resources are available:

Child Nutrition Programs (Food and Nutrition Services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA))

The schools, early childhood education programs, child care centers, after-school programs, or other programs children attend may offer free or reduced meals through the federal Child Nutrition Program, which provides breakfast, lunch, snacks, summer meals, and milk. Contact the school, center, or program to ask if they participate in any of the child nutrition programs and how to apply. Relative caregivers should inform the program that they are raising the child and whether they are doing so through a court order. An online state directory is available. To find your state office that manages the Child Nutrition Program search [FNS.usda.gov/contacts](https://www.FNS.usda.gov/contacts).

Foodbanks

Organizations that provide free food may also provide other items, such as diapers, to families in need. Visit [FeedingAmerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank](https://www.FeedingAmerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank) to find your local food bank.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The program's purpose is to end hunger and improve nutrition by providing monthly benefits to eligible low-income households to help them buy the food they need for good health. The eligibility rules and benefit amounts, based on income and household size, are determined by specific regulations. Applications for the Food Assistance Program are available in all county DHR offices or call your local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) for application assistance at (800) AGELINE (243-5463). If you would like to speak with your local DHR office but are unsure how to contact, call (800) 382-0499 or visit the website at [DHR.alabama.gov/county-office-contact](https://www.DHR.alabama.gov/county-office-contact).

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program

WIC is a supplemental nutrition program for pregnant women, breastfeeding women, women who have had a baby within the last six months, and infants and children under the age of five. Participants must meet income requirements and have a nutritional risk that proper nutrition could help improve. The person applying for WIC will need the following items:



- Proof of identification for parent/caretaker AND person applying for WIC (a driver's license, birth certificate, hospital birth card);
- Proof of residence (a document with your street address on it, such as a lease or bill); and
- Proof of enrollment in Medicaid, SNAP or Family Assistance or proof of current household income (proof of income must include documentation of income for everyone who is working in the household during the past 30 days i.e., weekly pay (four paycheck stubs), bi-weekly (two paycheck stubs), monthly (one paycheck stub)).

To see if you qualify, contact your county Public Health Department to make an appointment or call (888) 942-4673. For further information visit AlabamaPublicHealth.gov/wic

Child Wellbeing

The Office of Child Protective Services provides the following services for the Family Services Division of the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR):

- Maintains the Central Registry on Child Abuse and Neglect;
- Applies for and monitors grants for protective services projects; and
- Provides case consultation services.

To report suspected abuse, maltreatment, or neglect of a child, contact your local DHR office. Use the map available at DHR.Alabama.gov/county-office-contact or call ChildHelp at (800) 422-4453 to locate a local office.

Parenting Assistance Line (PAL)

The Parenting Assistance Line is a free service available to anyone who wants information and support in becoming a more confident parent or family caregiver. This resource aids grandparents and older relative caregivers who want to nurture a happy, healthy family. For more information call or text (866) 962-3030 or visit PAL.UA.edu.

Pregnant Teen Resources

Public Health Offices offer free, or low-cost medical services for those with no medical coverage. Services include birth control, pregnancy testing, and prenatal services. Parents are NOT required to accompany the teen. Call for an appointment. Search for additional information at AlabamaPublicHealth.gov/teenpregnancy.

Alabama Campaign

The Alabama Campaign provides access to the most up-to-date research and information currently available in the field of adolescent sexual health. Access to this information is an important priority and will assist Alabama communities in their efforts to champion healthy adolescent development. Visit AlabamaCampaign.org/resources for additional information or call (334) 265-8004.



Child Care and Education

Finding child care is a concern for many older relatives and grandparents who must work and need supervision and daycare for the children in their care. What are your specific needs? What types of care are available? Other parents, relatives, grandparents, friends, and coworkers are excellent resources when exploring child care options. You can also contact schools, civic clubs, or social organizations.

Child Care Aware of America

This resource provides information on child care licensing or resources for children with special needs in Alabama. For child care licensing, you may contact your local child care regulatory office at (866) 528-1694 or (334) 242-1425 or visit the website ChildCareAware.org/state/Alabama.

The Child Care Resource and Referral Service (CCR&R)

The Family Guidance Center Child Care Solutions works in partnership with parents, child care providers, community agencies, business leaders, and government officials to make high-quality child care available to families. Services are designed to increase the supply of quality child care that is affordable and accessible and to assist families in locating child care to meet their needs.

These services include:

- Consumer education/information in child care options
- Child care referrals/child care listings
- Referral services for children with special needs
- Parent education training and resources
- Resource library with materials for children and parents
- Information in child care financial assistance (subsidy program)

For more information, contact Child Care Resource and Referral Services at (334) 270-4100 or (800) 499-6597 or email at fgc@familyguidancecenter.org.

Help Me Grow Alabama

Help Me Grow (HMG) connects families to health and developmental resources so children (birth to age eight)

can start school healthy and ready to succeed. With this proven model, HMG helps ensure all children have the best possible start in life. To obtain further information call (866) 711-4025 or visit HelpMeGrowAlabama.org or AlabamaPartnershipForChildren.org.

Subsidized Child Care

The Office of Child Care Subsidy through the Department of Human Resources administers the subsidized child care program funded through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). The mission of the program is to provide Alabama's low- and moderate-income families with equal access to affordable quality child care services as they participate in work, educational, or training activities.

For more information in or around the Montgomery area, call (334) 242-1425. Outside of the Montgomery area, call toll free at (866) 528-1694 or visit DHR.alabama.gov/child-care/subsidy-overview.

Kinship Care Program

Kinship guardianship is a judicially created relationship that is awarded by the juvenile court to the relative. The program is limited to children who are eligible to receive state foster care payments and have resided in a fully approved related foster family home for at least six consecutive months. A case-by-case determination is made for each child. The following must be true:

1. Being returned home or adopted is not an appropriate option and is not in the best interest of the child.
2. The child has a strong attachment to the prospective kinship guardian, and the kinship guardian has a strong commitment to caring permanently for the child.
3. If a child is 14 or older, the child must be consulted regarding the kinship guardianship arrangement.

You will be assigned a DHR worker/kinship navigator who can assist you with questions, applications, and referrals to other services. You may also call the toll-free number at (844) 4ALA-KIN for assistance.



Fostering Hope Scholarship

Alabama's Fostering Hope Scholarship is a state-funded investment in the post-secondary education and training goals of qualified youth who were in the foster care system when they earned a high school diploma or GED. The scholarship is also extended to those who are a part of the State's Kinship-Guardianship program or adopted from Alabama foster care after the age of 14. This program covers tuition and required fees for eligible students enrolled in a post-secondary certificate or degree program. For additional information visit FosteringHopeAL.org or call (800) 585-7009 x 1.

Alabama Department of Education

The Alabama Department of Education manages K-12 education and special education services for preschool through grade 12. For information or assistance call (334) 242-9700 or for Alabama Special Education Services call (334) 242-8114 or visit AlabamaAchieves.org.

Alabama Head Start

Head Start is a federal program that promotes the school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families. To find a local Head Start Center visit, ECLKC.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator or call toll free at (866) 763-6481.

Resources for Special Needs Children

Easter Seals of Alabama

Easter Seals offers special needs resources which may include respite care services and other community supports. For more information call (334) 395-4489 or visit EasterSeals.com/Alabama.

The Arc of Alabama

The Arc offers special needs services that may include respite care, advocacy, training, and support groups. For more information call (334) 262-7688 or visit TheArcOfAl.org.

Early Intervention

Early intervention services are available for infants and toddlers at risk for developmental delays. For more information call (800) 543-3098 or visit Rehab.Alabama.gov and click on Early Intervention.

Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network

Alabama Lifespan Respite identifies respite care providers for children with special needs across Alabama. For more information call (866) 737-8252 or (256) 859-8300 or visit AlabamaRespite.org.



A Realistic Picture of Benefits

Insure Alabama

Insure Alabama is the online application for free and low-cost health care coverage for Alabama's families. It includes ALL Kids, Plan First, and Alabama Medicaid. For more information visit call (888) 373-KIDS (5437) or visit InsureAlabama.adph.state.al.us.

Alabama Medicaid

Medicaid is a federal-state health insurance assistance program. It provides complete health care coverage for low-income children and their parents, guardians, and caretakers, SSI recipients, children in foster care, pregnant women, and certain aged, blind, and disabled individuals.

How to Qualify: Children

- Children must be under age 19 and live in Alabama
- Children may be living in one or two parent families
- The income of all people included in the "family size" is counted
- The income of the legal parent (including adoptive parent and step-parent to the child(ren)) is counted if they are included in the child(ren)'s family size
- If the child does not qualify for Medicaid due to income, the application will be processed for the ALL Kids program.
- Children must be a US citizen or be in satisfactory immigration status according to agency rules

How to Qualify: Parents and Other Caretakers

- Applicant must have a child under the age of 19 who is a close relative and who lives in the home
- Applicant must be a resident of Alabama, and a U.S. citizen or be in satisfactory immigration status according to agency rules
- Assign all medical insurance or medical support benefits to the State
- Report household changes, such as: address changes, birth, pregnancy, someone moving in or out of your home, adoption, or change in income. NOTE: New income must be reported within 10 days of the day the applicant/recipient receives his/her first paycheck.

For more information call (800) 362-1504 or visit Medicaid.Alabama.gov.

ALL Kids: Alabama Children's Health Insurance Program

Alabama's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is administered by the Alabama Department of Public Health. It is medical insurance available for children under the age of 19 who do not have health insurance and whose family income is ABOVE the Medicaid income level but BELOW 300% of the federal poverty level. ALL Kids uses Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama (BCBSAL) to provide medical, mental health, and substance abuse services through its preferred provider network (PPO). For more information visit AlabamaPublicHealth.gov/allkids or call (888) 373-KIDS (5437).

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The Department of Human Resources Food Assistance Division administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Alabama. The Food Assistance Program's purpose is to end hunger and improve nutrition by providing monthly benefits to eligible low-income households to help them buy the food they need for good health. For more information call (334) 242-0143 or toll-free (800) 382-0499 or visit DHR.Alabama.gov/food-assistance.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

The program provides temporary cash assistance for basic needs for low-income families with children under age 18 or age 19 if they are a full-time student in a secondary school or in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training. Assistance is issued on Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. Contact the Alabama TANF program through the Alabama Department of Human Resources at (334) 242-1773 or (334) 242-1950 or DHR.Alabama.gov/family-assistance.

JOBS Program

The program provides services and work supports to parents receiving cash assistance to help them find and retain employment. These services and supports seek to address barriers such as lack of adequate child care, poor access to transportation, domestic violence, and substance abuse, all which greatly limit the ability to obtain and



keep employment. Services also include employability assessments, job readiness, job skills training, disability assessments, and adult education. Contact the Alabama Family Assistance Program through the Alabama Department of Human Resources at (334) 242-1773 or (334) 242-1950 or visit:

DHR.Alabama.gov/family-assistance/jobs-program.

Child Support Enforcement

The Child Support Enforcement Program (CSE or IV-D) is a joint federal and state effort to help families establish paternity (when necessary), obtain orders for payment of child support, and secure compliance with child support court orders. One of the goals of the CSE is to help families achieve self-sufficiency because the non-payment of child support is a key factor contributing to the impoverishment of children. Call (800) 284-4347 or visit

DHR.Alabama.gov/child-support-enforcement-division for additional information.

Social Security

A multigenerational program, Social Security provides income benefits to adults, older adults, and children. In addition to retirement and disability benefits, survivor's benefits are based on the child's parent's earnings and may help if a child's parents die. Your grandchild may also qualify for benefits based on your work record. The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program pays benefits to disabled adults and children who have limited income and resources. SSI benefits are also payable to people 65 and older without disabilities who meet the financial limits. An online directory is available to find your local Social Security Administration (SSA) office. For more information call (800) 772-1213 or visit Secure.SSA.gov.

**Never assume you will not qualify for a program or service.
Even if you are not eligible for a program, your child may benefit.
Always call if you have questions or need further information.**



Connecting Through Community Support

2-1-1 Connects Alabama

2-1-1 is a statewide call system of information and referral whose mission is to provide easy access to health and human services available throughout Alabama. Dial 2-1-1 (or 7-1-1 if you are hearing-impaired) and ask to be connected, or you can search resources at 211ConnectsAlabama.org/about-us.

AARP

The AARP Family Caregiving Resource Center provides tips and advice for caregivers at all stages, including articles, discussion boards for caregivers to connect, and links to resources. Visit States.AARP.org/Alabama/supporting-family-caregivers-in-Alabama for more information or call Alabama AARP at (866) 542-8167.

Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES)

ACES is the primary outreach and engagement organization for the land-grant mission of Alabama A&M University and Auburn University in cooperation with Tuskegee University. Extension offices are in all 67 Alabama counties, supported by Regional Extension Agents across the state, and Specialists at both partner universities. Their information and programs are available online, or in person at County Extension Offices and teaching sites throughout Alabama communities. To learn more visit ACES.edu/blog/category/about-us or call (334) 270-4133.

Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

The state's Children's Trust Fund, or the Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention, advocates for children and the strengthening of families throughout Alabama. For additional information call (334) 262-2951 or visit CTF.Alabama.gov.

Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education

This department coordinates the First Teacher Home Visitation program, the First Class Pre-K program, and houses the Head Start Collaboration Office for the state. For more information call (334) 353-2700 or visit Children.Alabama.gov.

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council

The council is a network of leaders developing a comprehensive system of care for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and their families. For more information call (205) 478-3402 or visit Autism.Alabama.gov.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)

AACAP's resource center AACAP.org/AACAP contains consumer-friendly definitions, answers frequently asked questions, and provides a definition of clinical resources and expert interviews. All families deserve access to quality mental health treatment. To find a local support group contact:

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Alabama: NAMIAlabama.org or call (334) 396-4797 or (800) 626-4199

Mental Health America (MHA): NMHA.org or call (800) 969-6642

MHA in Montgomery: MHA-Montgomery.org or call (334) 262-5500

MHA of Etowah County: MHAofEtowah.com or call (256) 547-6888

Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD): CHADD.org or call (800) 233-4050. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): AAP.org or call (847) 434-4000

American Red Cross - Free Smoke Alarms

If you cannot afford to purchase smoke alarms or are physically unable to install a smoke alarm, the American Red Cross may be able to help. For more information call the Mid-Alabama Chapter (Regional Headquarters) at (205) 795-8700 or RedCross.org/local/Alabama/about-us/our-work/home-fire-safety.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (Alabama)

This organization provides mentorship opportunities that foster relationships between adults and children, youth with



disabilities, and children needing support and guidance. For more information visit BBBSofAlabama.org.

Generations United

The mission of Generations United is to improve the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all. Visit GU.org/who-we-are to find out more.

Grandfamilies

This organization serves as a national legal resource in support of Grandfamilies within and outside the child welfare system. The National Center on Grandfamilies works to enact policies and promote programs to help Grandfamilies address challenges. For information on existing state laws and policies affecting Grandfamilies visit GrandFamilies.org.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

A resource available to help prevent suicide, the Lifeline provides 24/7 free and confidential support for people in distress. It also provides prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals. For more information visit SuicidePreventionLifeline.org or call (800) 273-TALK (8255).

Trevor Project

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) young people under age 25. Trained counselors are available for support 24/7. For information call the Trevor Project Lifeline at (866) 488-7386 or visit TheTrevorProject.org. It is a confidential and secure resource.

YMCA

The YMCA is a nonprofit agency committed to strengthening community by connecting all people to their potential, purpose, and each other. Working locally, the YMCA focuses on empowering young people, improving health and well-being, and inspiring action in and across communities. To learn about more services or to find a local YMCA visit YMCA.org.

Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS)

ADSS advocates for older adults and people with disabilities by providing home and community-based services to ensure those served can live in their homes and communities with dignity and independence as long as possible. Contact ADSS at (334) 242-5743 or toll free (877) 425-2243. Visit the ADSS website at AlabamaAgeLine.gov.



Problem-Solving Tips































- ✓ Always ask any questions you might have. There are no wrong questions. If you don't understand the answer, ask for an explanation.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to ask for help when needed.
- ✓ If you have custody, take the custody papers with you everywhere. Make copies of them and keep them in your car, your purse, and your house.
- ✓ Document. Document. Document. Write down all dates, times, and events relating to the children or their parents. Always keep a notebook handy to jot down information as you are thinking of it. Do this even if things seem to be going fine at the time. This will be helpful if you must go to court later. You may be glad you wrote that note two years from now.
- ✓ Respond to all correspondence. Do not assume the necessary information got to the appropriate person. If you receive a letter, respond to the person who sent the letter. If you have a phone message, respond to the person who left the message, even if you must call numerous times. Always leave a message so the person knows you are trying to reach him or her.
- ✓ Attend a support group if possible. Meeting others who have been in a similar situation will give you the courage to get through the difficult days.
- ✓ Don't expect to always get an answer. Many people at the agencies you contact may not have dealt with your problem. When an answer is unclear, ask for clarification, or ask someone else. Don't be afraid to ask to speak with a supervisor or someone at the state level.
- ✓ Be sure to give full, accurate information to everyone from whom you seek help. One small detail may change the answer completely.
- ✓ Ask for the full name, agency represented, and phone number from everyone with whom you discuss your situation. Ask for business cards. Record this information in a notebook.



Immunization Checklist

Child's name: _____

Immunization	Birth	2 Mos	4 Mos	6 Mos	12-18 Mos	2 Yrs	4 Yrs	6 Yrs	11-12 Yrs	16 Yrs	ANNUAL
Chickenpox Varicella											
DTP											
Hep A Hepatitis A											
Hep B Hepatitis B											
Hib Haemophilus Influenza type B											
HPV Human Papilloma Virus											
IPV Polio											
MCVA4 Meningococcal Disease											
MMR Measles, Mumps											
PCV											
RV											
Flu											
Tdap											



Important Phone Numbers

Use this page to record important numbers. Keep this book handy so you can access these numbers when you need them.

Emergency	911
Poison Control	1-800-222-1222
Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-422-4453 or 1-800-4-A-CHILD
Domestic Abuse Hotline	1-800-799-7233, TTY 1-800-787-3224
Substance Abuse Hotline	1-800-662-4357
National Suicide Prevention Hotline	1-800-273-8255
Alabama Department of Senior Services	1-877-425-2243
Area Agency on Aging	1-800-AGELINE (243-5463)
Child's Doctor	
Child's School	
Child's Day Care	
Friends, Relatives, & Neighbors	
Case worker	

**As you take advantage of resources and information, we hope you will
also take time to care for yourself and enjoy
the journey with your children.**



Grandparents' Notes

[illegible]

**This toolkit was made possible by funding provided by
the Alabama Department of Senior Services.**



Alabama Department of Senior Services • 1-800-AGELINE (1-800-243-5463) • AlabamaAgeline.gov

